

and Oceans Canada. The activity of ocean swells in the Gulf of Alaska and the Atlantic Ocean is downloaded every 15 minutes and translated into sound and motion. Custom software interprets real-time wave data and generates sounds that fluctuate in pitch, volume and timbre. Data is also used to control the movements of the speakers, which rock, bob and swing. Both sound and motion correspond to changes at sea. When the sea is calm, the sounds are low in pitch and volume and the movement of the speakers is slow and slight. When the sea is rough, the sounds are more varied and the movement of the speakers is more dramatic.

Open Tuning explores the dialectical relationship between ocean and city, real and computer-generated, here and there. In his artist's statement, Kelly points out that "the ocean's currents directly affect regional and global climates, but its physical force and influence have no representation in the urban landscape...The inter-connectedness of geographically separate and dissimilar environments is the major theme in this project." *Open Tuning* translocates the experience of the ocean to an urban gallery setting. Assembled from prefabricated technology, *Open Tuning* creates a direct and immediate sensory experience to help us make a real connection to a natural phenomenon that is removed in time and space. And while the installation is an aural simulation of the ocean, it corresponds directly to real-time changes in the weather and environment, giving the work a fluid, living quality.

The fascinating aspect of the project's concept is the way in which it uses sound and technology to translate nature into art. The exposed mechanics and robotic gestures provide some visual representation but ultimately undermine the possibility of any illusion of the ocean; the work is primarily a sound installation. Kelly has replaced ocean waves with sound waves, filling up the gallery space much like water in the ocean. This immersive installation envelops and penetrates our entire bodies, facilitating a visceral, corporeal connection to the information being transmitted. Kelly explains that the "project aims to engage the entire body in the listening experience as opposed to just the ears. Grounded by a loose musical framework, waves of dissonance and harmony in the aural environment of the installation space are a real extension of the ocean environment. Sound replaces water."

As the title *Open Tuning (WaveUp)* suggests, Kelly's work is an alternative way of tuning our bodies and minds to the experience of the world. Regardless of the geographical distance that separates ocean and city, Kelly's installation serves as a powerful reminder that the ocean's environmental conditions can directly impact life on land. Kelly's immersive sound installation extends our experience beyond the visual representation of the ocean, inviting us to consider sound as another way to exchange information and help us understand and connect to something that is physically removed or not visible. ►



Stephen Kelly, *Open Tuning (WaveUp)*, 2009, mixed media (installation view at TRUCK Contemporary Art, Calgary)
IMAGE COURTESY OF TRUCK CONTEMPORARY ART

RYAN TRECARTIN: ANY EVER

THE POWER PLANT CONTEMPORARY
ART GALLERY, TORONTO

BY NADJA SAYEJ

A dozen drag queens decked out in white wigs muscle about a jetliner with their Blackberries in tow. One rotund bitch with bangs takes a deep haul on her cigarette. Another with blonde locks raises a pointed finger in timid objection. This is not a pack of Madonna impersonators—though it very well could be. Rather, it's a clip from Ryan Trecartin's *K-CoreaINC.K (Section A)* (2009), a 33-minute chaotic, gonzo romp through the party life, the boardroom and back again—sugared with iridescent lip gloss and reading glasses like a receptionist in a dentist's office might wear.

Trecartin is *the* hot topic. This 28-year-old Philadelphia video artist, who directs, edits and stars as multiple characters in each of his energetic videos, put seven works on show for his solo Canadian debut, *Any Ever*. Welcome to the world of



Ryan Trecartin,
*K-CorealNC.K (Section
 A)*, 2009, video, 33 min.
 IMAGE COURTESY OF THE
 POWER PLANT

fast edits and sharp scowls, guarded sceneries and clique-ish club-goers with an existential edge (you know they know the location of the afterparty—and the meaning of postmodernism). Three videos are from his 2009 series *Trill-ogy Comp* and the other four are from his latest series, *Re'Search Wait'S* (2010).

Trecartin is probably the youngest artist in recent history to have what feels like a retrospective at Toronto's Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery. This is where Paper Rad meets Audrey Kitching in a David LaChapelle photo shoot. And where the cult of the not-so-famous society bloggers hooks up with the kids from an Irvine Welsh novel after everyone does acid during after-school drama class; it is a *Pride* parade on repeat.

But it is more than just that. Trecartin, who grew up in a steel-mill family in the

countryside of Ohio, was studying at the Rhode Island School of Design when he started posting his videos on Friendster. One caught the eye of artist Sue de Beer, who forwarded it to a curator at the New Museum in New York. And his work soon spread like wildfire—from showing at the 2006 Whitney Biennial to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles to the Saatchi Gallery in London. Trecartin has also screened at the Moore Space in Miami, the Penrith Regional Gallery in Australia and the *USA Today* exhibition at the Royal Academy in London. And he was featured alongside Shilpa Gupta and Cory Arcangel as part of the New Museum in New York's *Younger Than Jesus* triennial in 2009, which featured the works of many of the most promising artists under the age of 33. Finally, he was given the best new artist 2009 award by the Guggenheim.

Simply put, this art star has quickly built an empire based on online narcissism. Any one of his drag queens, club kids or suburban brats can easily call to mind the kind of self-absorbed micro-celebrity chatter found in Emily Gould posts: confessions and catty comments. His early work from art school had raver kids driving down suburban streets at night with six NINE INCH NAILS fans hanging out of the sunroof, covered in fake blood. And girls in jogging gear asking things like, "vanity or art form?"

But Trecartin has moved on from his poetic, curious chapter for something more sensational. While his most prominent

piece to date is *I-Be Area* (2007), a feature-length video full of hyperactive, entertainment-industry queer ramblings and the Internet, his work shown at the Power Plant is thrown into overdrive—and will be hard to top next time around. Nowadays, his work is so super-aggressive and multi-conversational that the cartoonish characters in each video talk so fast it's hard to take notes without missing a word.

Whether it's the Blackberry-obsessed tween girl band called TOLD, or the middle-aged costumed tramps prancing around in Marilyn Monroe wigs, Trecartin has come to personify online existence. His work is so of his time that there's no need to explain further what we already know. Each character design, each cartoon, each Glimmerace blogger in Trecartin's intricate, destructive stage productions—who say things like, "I'm really into the third world right now; I'm designing ashtrays"—is as diverse in personality as what he or she would deem click-worthy. Or deletable.

Suburban destruction is the name of his game and the kids are symbols proving it—obnoxious bratty girls too busy texting their friends next door to help out their parents with a garage sale. Massimiliano Giona, the director of special exhibitions for the New Museum, used the term "hysterical realism" to describe Trecartin's work—a term coined by critic James Wood to define the excessive mania in the fiction of David Foster Wallace and Don DeLillo.

It's almost as if each video is an online long-term relationship where you never get

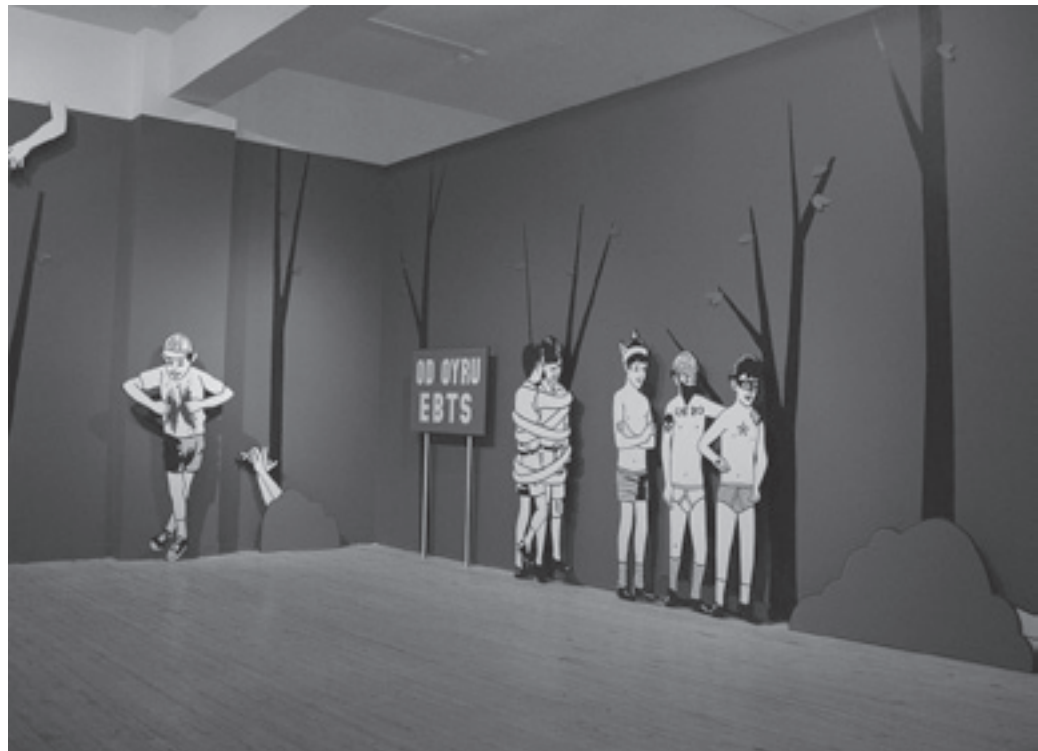
to meet the person in real life—an endless road of imprisoned fantasy lived only through longing to know who they really are. But the characters are so hysterically real that we'll never know what they're like—or even imagine what they're like—off-camera. In Trecartin's videos, there is no behind-the-scenes drama, only stylish stunts and gimmicks on endless loop. One gets it rather quickly.

Trecartin may have made a case for himself by making the banal beautiful, but how his videos age—and how he continues to develop them—will determine whether or not they remain worthy of a second view. In any case, it's hard to feel welcome when characters like Max, a ghetto-fabulous teen in a ball hat and gold grill, turns to the camera and says things like: "I love being in places that mean nothing to me, nothing at all." ▶

DARYL VOCAT: THE SECRET OF THE MIDNIGHT SHADOW

ARTSPACE, PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO

BY SALLY FRATER



Daryl Vocat, *The Secret of the Midnight Shadow*, 2009, acrylic on MDF (installation view at Artspace, Peterborough).
PHOTO DARYL VOCAT

Walking into *The Secret of the Midnight Shadow*, Daryl Vocat's print-based installation at Artspace in Peterborough, it feels as though one has fallen down the proverbial rabbit hole and come out at the scene of a Boy Scout meeting gone awry. Vocat's work is part of a group of three installations at the Gallery that formally reference mediums associated with children's entertainment.¹ However, the macabre undercurrent of Vocat's installation brings forth memories of the hellish social interactions and situations that one often must navigate during childhood and the cruelties that children visit upon one another when they are away from the watchful eyes of adults.

Painted vivid cobalt blue, Artspace's main gallery becomes the backdrop for a series of odd events. Set amid an enclave of spindly trees that are mostly barren, save for the odd bright green leaf or green bush, it is difficult to decipher what season is being referenced. The starkness of the vegetation would suggest late fall or early winter, yet the hue of the leaves on the trees and bushes evokes spring. Irrespective of the season to which the artist alludes, one can be certain that the depicted happenings are occurring at midnight (which is often referred

to as the witching hour). As Artspace's west wall of the gallery is windowed, the installation can still be viewed outside of gallery hours. And, when passing by the gallery at night, any thoughts that one has chanced upon a playful lighthearted work quickly fall away.

Disturbing scenarios within the installation undercut the initial whimsy brought forth by the reference to children's pop-up books: violence seems to loom at every turn. A figure with a terrified expression on his face plummets towards the ground, a lone arm extending from a tree above him. On the ground beneath him, two raised arms protrude from behind a bush, and another hand (ostensibly attached to another body) grasps the unseen person's wrist firmly to prevent his or her escape. To the right of these figures, a solitary boy stands cross-legged with arms akimbo, sporting a slightly crazed expression, his face and shirtfront smeared with red. Next to him stand three figures—naked save for shoes and a pair of shorts on one and underwear on the two others—sporting tattoos, masks and headdresses, suggestive of their participation in some sort of ritual or initiation. They stand smirking over a bound figure whose tied legs stick